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FEB 17 1984

MEMORANDUM

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FROM: S/LPD - Johnathan S. Miller, Acting *JSM*

Attached for your information is an interesting paper on the anti-religious activities of the New Jewel Movement in Grenada.

The document is unclassified, so please feel free to give a copy to anyone who may request it.

Attachments:

1. Distribution List
2. New Jewel Movement Paper

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2/16/84 (0004L)

GRENADA: THE NEW JEWEL MOVEMENT AND RELIGION*

Summary

Concern over the influence of organized religion on the Grenadian people had reached a point in 1983 where Prime Minister Maurice Bishop considered the formation of a "progressive" church and planned to discuss this idea with the Cubans and Nicaraguans. Documents captured in Grenada show that church activities were kept under constant surveillance by security officials and that plans were afoot to introduce Marxist-Leninist instruction into primary and secondary schools as a means of alienating youth from the influence of religion.

* * * * *

Introduction

The governing New Jewel Movement (NJM) was compelled by its Marxist-Leninist ideology to regard religion as an enemy and to seek to undermine it. The various churches, at first neutral after the March 1979 revolution, moved into opposition as the undemocratic nature of the NJM became apparent in 1980.

Despite a shortage of trained security personnel, an officer attached to the Ministry of the Interior, Michael Roberts, was assigned full time to reporting on church activities. His report of March 15, 1983, and that of his superior, Maj. Keith Roberts, of July 12, 1983, concluded that churches were "the main political source of internal counter revolution."

* This paper was prepared in conjunction with a contract study undertaken by William L. Krieg as part of the Department of State's external research program. The study calls for a preliminary evaluation of captured Grenadian documents for the light they may throw on important political themes in the country's domestic and foreign affairs. It is possible that further research into the documents will alter some of the findings of this paper, which in any case are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the US Government. Comments on this paper and inquiries about the program may be addressed to the Director of the Office of Long-Range Assessments and Research, US Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20520.

February 2, 1984

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Security Findings on the Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church, by far the largest on the island, numbered some 70,000 baptized members, according to Keith Roberts. This would represent well over half of the population. Maurice Bishop himself was a Catholic. The security officers considered Roman Catholic Bishop Sydney Charles, head of the church in Grenada, to be one of their most formidable opponents, however, and described him as "very popular among church goers."

The Catholic Church first expressed opposition to government policies in 1980-81 by voicing concern for the human rights of political detainees at the Richmond Hill Prison. Keith Roberts stated that "every Sunday at one church or another priests were heard to ask people to 'pray for the detainees' whose rights have been denied." The Catholics, he said, organized retreats, seminars, and conferences at which "hostile statements were hurled against the Grenadian Revolution on so-called violation of human rights." Other traditional churches took the same line and also pushed for elections.

Of particular concern to the security staff were the efforts of Bishop Charles to invigorate the youth organizations affiliated with the church and to bring them under his personal control. He also had copies of the Jerusalem Bible imported and placed on sale. This bible, according to Keith Roberts, was written in simple language "so as to make it easier for the church masses to read. This indicates the Church's understanding of the ideological struggle." A booklet entitled Marxism, Humanism and Christianity was circulated to all priests to study; it purportedly contained answers to "scientific socialism" and, wrote Michael Roberts, "in general distorts the teaching of Marx and Lenin." At a meeting on January 2, 1983, Bishop Charles said the church was facing its greatest challenge in 1983: "...there are people who want to dictate to the Churches what to do and 1983 will even see attempts to CRUSH the Church." Michael Roberts concluded it was abundantly clear that the Catholic Church was gearing up for confrontation with the government.

The security officers considered that all the churches in Grenada were in varying degrees hostile to the revolution and that the revolutionary government had no support among the religious leaders. This was not true of the mass of church goers who, Roberts thought, often were better disposed toward the revolution.

The Anglican Church

The second largest religious group was the Anglican Church, described as being composed of the elite of Grenadian society while the Roman Catholic Church drew its members "from the poor and oppressed classes." The Anglicans were severely handicapped by lack of ordained clergy; most services were conducted by lay people. The leader of the Anglicans was Archdeacon Hoskins Huggins, who on

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December 24, 1982, urged his parishioners "to guard the right of freedom of worship and to do all in their power to ensure this right be always part of the People." This, Michael Roberts thought, was only a variation of the "challenge" line enunciated by the Roman Catholic Bishop.

The Archdeacon, Roberts continued, was "backed by a host of reactionary elements who dominate all the Church's organizations." The Anglicans were also reorganizing their youth groups and, for the first time, the Anglicans and Catholics had a joint Corpus Christi procession--an indication of unity which clearly disturbed the security officers. Archdeacon Huggins' Christmas Eve statement was commented upon in a meeting of the NJM Central Committee--the controlling political body in Grenada--and it was decided that someone should "speak to" the Archdeacon. Unfortunately, there is no available record of whether this decision was acted upon.

Government Recommendations

The security staff reported that the smaller denominations were also "reactionary" and lamented that there was no "left" religion in Grenada. In view of what he considered a growing threat to the revolution, Keith Roberts made a number of recommendations, including these:

- Intensify surveillance of churches and require all public associations, both religious and secular, to register the basic facts of their organization, financing, etc.
- Continue to develop cooperation in this area with Cuban comrades at the party-to-party level.
- Improve NJM mass organizations.
- Remove from primary schools all deeply religious head teachers and replace them with "progressive" teachers.
- Provide political education for all teachers by September 1983. (A decision on this subject already had been taken by the Organizing Committee on May 9, 1983. It had determined that political education should start at the beginning of the school year; that the Teachers Committee should identify progressive teachers to be trained in this work; and that reactionary teachers were to be removed from the schools.)
- Get Marxist-Leninist literature into all schools by September 1983.
- Open Marxist-Leninist book shops in different parishes of the country.

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To the recommendations submitted by Keith Roberts, Maurice Bishop added in his own handwriting:

- "- Open cinemas
- "- Start progressive church (Talk with Nicaraguans & Cubans)."

Political Expediency

The NJM when possible cloaked its propagandistic activities in churchly raiment. One report describes a "cultural seminar" held at Pope Paul's Centre in July, probably 1982 or earlier. The resource personnel were provided by the NJM and included Chris de Riggs, a member of the Central Committee, and Bernard Bourne, who later served as Minister-Counselor at the Grenadian Embassy in Moscow. The tenor of the proceedings is apparent from the topics discussed:

"An analysis of our present political situation," by Comrade Bernard Bourne;

"Role of Youth in Revolutionary Free Grenada," by Comrade Ruggles Ferguson; and

"Role of Culture in a Revolutionary Society," by Comrade Chris de Riggs.

According to the press, when Pope Paul's Centre was searched by the US military after the invasion, the persons in charge claimed that it was used only for religious retreats and similar purposes.

That the NJM was not completely united in its attitude toward religion is evident in the comments of party members in the Grenadian Embassy in Cuba who met in December 1982 to formulate comments on the "Line of March"--a paper circulated by the Central Committee outlining the policies to be pursued by the party during the year ahead. The party members noted the absence of any guidance on religion in the document and suggested the inclusion of a statement establishing freedom of religious practices--so long as they were not inhuman or used to destabilize the revolution--and advocating equality between believers and nonbelievers.

It is difficult to say whether this liberal statement accurately represented the sentiments of the group or whether it was a recognition of political expediency, considering the strong religious attachments of most Grenadians. The Ambassador to Cuba, who presided over the meeting, was Maj. Leon (Bogo) Cornwall, apparently a hard-liner. Cornwall played an active role in the short-lived Revolutionary Military Government which followed the assassination of Bishop. In either case, however, it shows an awareness of the strength of organized religion in Grenada and the difficulties of reconciling this situation with the principles of a Marxist-Leninist party.